

GLORIA'S ROMANCE

By MR. and MRS.
RUPERT HUGHES

Novelized from the Motion Picture Romance
of the same name.



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SIXTEENTH INSTALLMENT

SYNOPSIS.

Pierpont Stafford, with his daughter Gloria, is wintering at Palm Beach. Gloria is a vivacious but willful young lady who chafes under the restraining hand of a governess from whom she repeatedly escapes. Her childish capers cause young Doctor Royce to fall in love with her. Becoming lost in the everglades she falls into the hands of the Seminole Indians. Gloria falls in love with her rescuer, Freneau. Five years later she leaves school and meets Freneau at the theater; he has forgotten her. Later a telegram comes from Freneau. She replies but her telegrams are returned. She sees the supposed suicide of Freneau in the paper. Gloria swears to find the murderer of her lover. Royce becomes alarmed and tells what he knows of Freneau to Mr. Stafford. Together they seek to prevent scandal from enveloping Gloria. She accuses them in her mind of conspiracy against her. Gloria sets about to run down Freneau's murderer. Royce warns Mulry to tell Gloria nothing. Gloria calls on Mulry and there sees Louis who is also worried. Gloria's suspicions are aroused. Royce endeavors to show her the difficulty she faces. Gloria goes to David's country home. She meets Mulry who flees at once. Gloria insists on going to Palm Beach. Again she sees Mulry there. He leaves for the North. She is recognized by her one-time captor, the young Indian chief. He tells her that Royce and not Freneau was her rescuer at that time. Gloria attends night court; she sees Mulry there. Also the tramp who attacked Freneau. But Judge Freeman releases him. She follows the tramp when he leaves the court and falls into the hands of hold-up men. She finds herself in a low saloon dance hall, and is selected by one of the patrons as his partner. Doctor Royce, however, follows her and when he attempts a rescue calls down a riot on their heads. The hall is raided and the crowd, including Gloria and Royce, is arrested and taken before Judge Freeman. The newspapers feature Gloria's arrest. Reporters surround the house. Casimir arrives with the child Gloria promised to adopt. She orders Royce to take Casimir's wife to the Stafford home. She follows Trask and lands on a houseboat; to hear him accused of Freneau's murder. She confronts him; he imprisons her, but she ties him up and escapes. By many stages she arrives home. With the yacht Gloria and the men pursue the barge.

A Modern Pirate.

People who raise children are sure of a life of surprises. They would have more than they get if they could see everything that goes on.

Pierpont Stafford had been kept pretty well surprised of late by his daughter's actions. In his haste he had said that she was probably "on that canal barge in the river." He did not expect to be taken seriously by the fates. But there his daughter was, at least on another barge, miles farther up the stream but drifting downward. She was in command of the ship, at the tiller trying to steer the bulky hulk.

When Gloria saw that the captain of the tug had noticed the slight detail of the parted hawser and the lost convoy she was vexed. When she saw the tugboat turning around to recapture the barge she felt that it would be hard to explain about the prisoners she had fastened down in the cabin. She supposed it was mutiny or something for a passenger to tie up captain, crew and cook, and change the course of the ship. She believed that people who did that were usually hung from the yardstick or something. She hoped that the old barge did not have such a thing on board.

The nearer the tug came the louder the pilot and the crew yelled at her, and the less Gloria wanted to meet them. She had never met any tugmen and she felt no ambition to get into their social set. It was growing so dark by now that they could not see who was at the tiller, and they kept calling her: "Trask" or "Oh, Jed!"

At length Gloria decided that she was not needed any longer. She had noted the little boat bobbing along after the barge and she felt that she might as well capture that. It was more nearly her size. She would be safer alone on a skiff than on the barge when the tugmen released that fiend of a Trask. He had planned to kill her before she tied him up. He would certainly do no less now that he had escaped. Jed had evidently picked himself up from the rocking-chair trap, untied Trask and unmuffled Nell. The three had been pounding and howling for some time. The hatch held for a while, but they were going at it now with something as heavy as a battering ram. It would yield soon surely and then where would she be?

She ran to the edge of the barge and hauled in on the painter attached to the little boat. The barge was swishing in the tide and it was trying to run over the skiff. But Gloria had no other avenue of escape. She hung across the edge of the barge and dropped into the skiff. Her aim was not very accurate and the river nearly got her. But she sat down quickly and steadied herself and the boat. She began to ply the oars with great eagerness, but little progress.

At length she noticed that she had forgotten to cast off. She ran to the bow and had to untie the painter. The wet knots were torture to her delicate hands, but at last she was free and the boat fell away from the barge. The river was dark and menacing, and its current was like some invisible genie dragging the skiff away to its lair. Still, when Gloria saw the tug come alongside the barge and make fast, and saw Trask, Jed and Nell dash up the companionway and meet the tughands on the deck, she felt that the current would be kinder to her than the men would have been.

What explanation Trask and Jed made she could not imagine. Evidently it was not a good one, for the crew from the tugboat gesticulated violently and it looked as if there would be a big fight. Gloria hoped that they all would throw one another overboard.

The tugboat crew went back to their quarters. Trask ran back to stare at Gloria. He shook his fist at her and she rowed faster. But the barge moved northward, following the puffing tug.

Gloria breathed a sigh of relief at her escape. Then she realized that after all Trask had also escaped. She was so angry at this cancellation of her success that she started to row back after the barge. What she would have done had she overtaken it she did not stop to think. The current prevented the possibility of knowing. The Hudson streaming into the sea carried Gloria with it in spite of all her efforts at the oars. She gave up at length and devoted all her energies to rowing ashore. The nearer shore was the farther for her, because a landing on the west bank would compel a lengthy roundabout to fetch her to her home on the east bank.

She rowed for the New York shore and crept toward it slowly, though the boat turned southerly so fast that she feared to be swept on down to the city's crowded park pavements. It was lonely out there on the dark river. Her arms ached with fatigue, her silken hands were pouching with blisters.

Finally she felt the keel grate and she landed on a rocky point. She forgot the little dinghy and it slipped back and danced on down the river to some unknown fate. Gloria felt better on the firm earth and she grew angry again. She stared at the barge, now a mere smudge on the vague horizon.

She whispered to herself: "I'll get him yet, and he won't get away!"

Gloria thought of her father's yacht. She believed that it had been recently put into commission. If only she had it now! But it was loafing at anchor in the river at her father's country home, the last she had heard of it.

To get a yacht! That was her small requirement now. She must get home to get it. She plunged along till she came to a lonely road. After a time a farmer appeared driving a wagonload of empty milk cans. Gloria envied him his throne on the high seat. He was the rich one now and she the pauper. He called out: "Have a lift, miss? How fur ye goin'?"

"I'm going as far as you'll take me, please."

"Get in, then, miss, and we'll jog along."

The farmer was naturally anxious to know what errand his guest was on, but she did not exchange information for hospitality. She grew so impatient for faster progress that when the farmer came to his own lane and turned into it she was glad to get down and walk.

Gloria trudged till she was worn out. All the motors she saw seemed to be going the wrong way. When finally she heard one coming behind her she

his flatteries because she needed his motor, but she grew angrier and angrier, and when he began to call her "Cutie" she decided that his usefulness had ceased to exist. One of the twain simply had to get out and walk. Gloria was sure that it was not to be herself. She plotted carefully how to throw this new skipper overboard. The victim helped her to an idea by leaning close to her and murmuring: "Kind of cozy, Cutie, huh?"

"Very," said Gloria, foaming at his impudence.

"We make a great team, huh?"

"Great," said Gloria.

"Atta girl," said the youth and slid his left arm around her.

Gloria laughed harshly and somehow managed to knock the hat off her wooer's head. The wind whipped it back and the driver shut off the engine and threw on his emergency brake.

"So sorry," said Gloria, smiling in the dark.

"At's all right, Cutie," said the young man. "Back in a minute."

He slid from his place and ran back along the road for his hat. Gloria had been studying his methods of running the car and comparing it with her own. As soon as the driver started back Gloria

As she ran in through the gates she almost collided with her father's car. The piercing searchlight blinded him until he heard her voice from behind it. He welcomed her to his arms and was so glad to have her safely there again that it was several minutes before he began to scold her.

She asked him to hush, please, as she had no time to waste and she wanted to borrow his yacht and its entire crew for awhile. Pierpont refused the loan with all the severity of a bank president, but Gloria calmly sent for the sailing master and in the presence of her father gave him orders to be ready as soon as she had had her long delayed dinner.

Doctor Royce and Judge Freeman were at the house. They sat with Gloria while she told them of her adventures as she ate a hastily reassembled dinner. She said to Doctor Royce: "I am surprised, Stephen, at your leaving me alone by myself to solve my new problems. Of course, you didn't know where I was going, but you usually manage to arrive in the nick of time. You ought to have been there."

"I wish I had been there," Royce replied. His heart ached at the sight of her beauty and at the

a second time. Why, I do not know. Why don't you tell me why?"

Judge Freeman looked angry. His eyes turned to Pierpont and his answer was to him and not to Gloria.

"You must realize, Pierpont, that such a cruise is no place for a girl of Gloria's position and breeding." "That's true," said Pierpont. "It's all off, Gloria." "No, it isn't!" Gloria cried. "If you don't help me to catch that fiend I'll get the police after him."

"What police?" Pierpont laughed. "The local chief? He couldn't capture a snail."

"The man is out of his jurisdiction, anyway," said the judge. "It would be quite a complicated process getting the fellow arrested and he would probably be hard to find."

"My way is a very simple way," said Gloria. "Instead of sending, go! That's a good motto. But the judge will neither send nor go, and once more I want to ask him why?"

The judge was not used to being cross-examined and he bore it ill. He faltered:

"Some day you'll know and you'll realize that I acted for your peace of mind."

"My peace of mind depends on capturing that man!" Gloria answered curtly, "and anybody that wants to can come along now."

Royce saluted and waited for orders. Pierpont decided to go. Judge Freeman refused and repeated his warnings, but Gloria would not even tell him good-by. She, her father and Royce went down to the yacht landing and were carried aboard in a little boat, the oars flashing in the moonlight and the sailors coming handsomely alongside.

It was splendid to feel the deck underfoot. Gloria chuckled at the contrast between the yacht and the canal boat. She rejoiced in the famous speed of the engines and she could imagine the prow slicing the waves in pursuit of the lumbering barge. She was on a racehorse and she was chasing an ox. But racehorses are delicate giants and so are race cars and racing yachts. This sea rover declined to rove. There was engine trouble in the works and the captain brought the hateful news that the yacht could not budge for several hours. Gloria was bitterly disappointed and completely baffled.

"It's the old story of the tortoise and the hare," she grumbled. "While we are sleeping here the barge is moving along every moment. We'll never find it. It'll get away for keeps this time."

"Never despair," said Royce stupidly.

"Don't speak to me," said Gloria. She flounced away to the stern deck to be by herself. Then the soft breeze blew away her anger and her furies. In spite of herself she fell asleep. Her father came to urge her to go to her berth, but she refused to stir. "You'd better sell this old tub and buy a motor boat," she said.

Later Gloria was half-awakened by a little chill. She was too cold to say where she was and too drowsy to move. She saw a shadowy figure tiptoeing up. She knew that a steamer rug was gently laid over her. Half a dream, she murmured, "Thank you, Stephen."

She did not know whether he heard her or not. When she awoke the yacht was redeeming its lost reputation. It was hastening up the river at a splendid gait. The sun was just crossing the eastern wall of hills.

Gloria went to her stateroom to bathe and dress for a new and busy day. Breakfast was served on deck, and the Pullmades slid back with encouraging rapidity.

Before Gloria had finished her breakfast a tug, towing a barge, was sighted on the northern edge of the water. Gloria went to the pilot house to stimulate the pursuit. She had great fun calling down the tube to the engineer to go as fast as possible and then still faster. She tried to hurry the pilot, too, but he explained that he could not increase the speed by turning his wheel. Gloria asked him numberless questions and made him teach her how to steer the yacht. At first he helped, but soon she could throw the wheel over to the queen's taste.

Gradually the barge grew larger and larger and its ugliness more distinct. The men on the tug paid no heed to the yacht following closely. But Gloria saw a gaunt figure on the barge watching anxiously. Soon he was distinguishable as Trask. Gloria left the pilot house and went forward to make sure. She recognized him as he recognized her. She called to him to surrender. He laughed. Then she saw that he had a rifle in his hand.

Trask had been mystified beyond endurance by the whole transaction. He had left Freneau's body in the moonlit snows in front of the Soldiers' and Sailors' monument on Riverside drive. He had watched the papers for days, expecting to read in each one an account of the finding of the body.

He had been driven frantic with anxiety by the silence of the journals. He had begun almost to wonder if he had really killed his man or only dreamed it, when suddenly the headlines had flared out with the statement that Freneau's body had been found in the lower bay, miles below the spot on Riverside drive where he had left it empty of soul.

He had cudgeled his brain trying to conceive who could have disposed of the evidence of his crime and with what motive. The papers said that Freneau had committed suicide, and nobody disputed it.

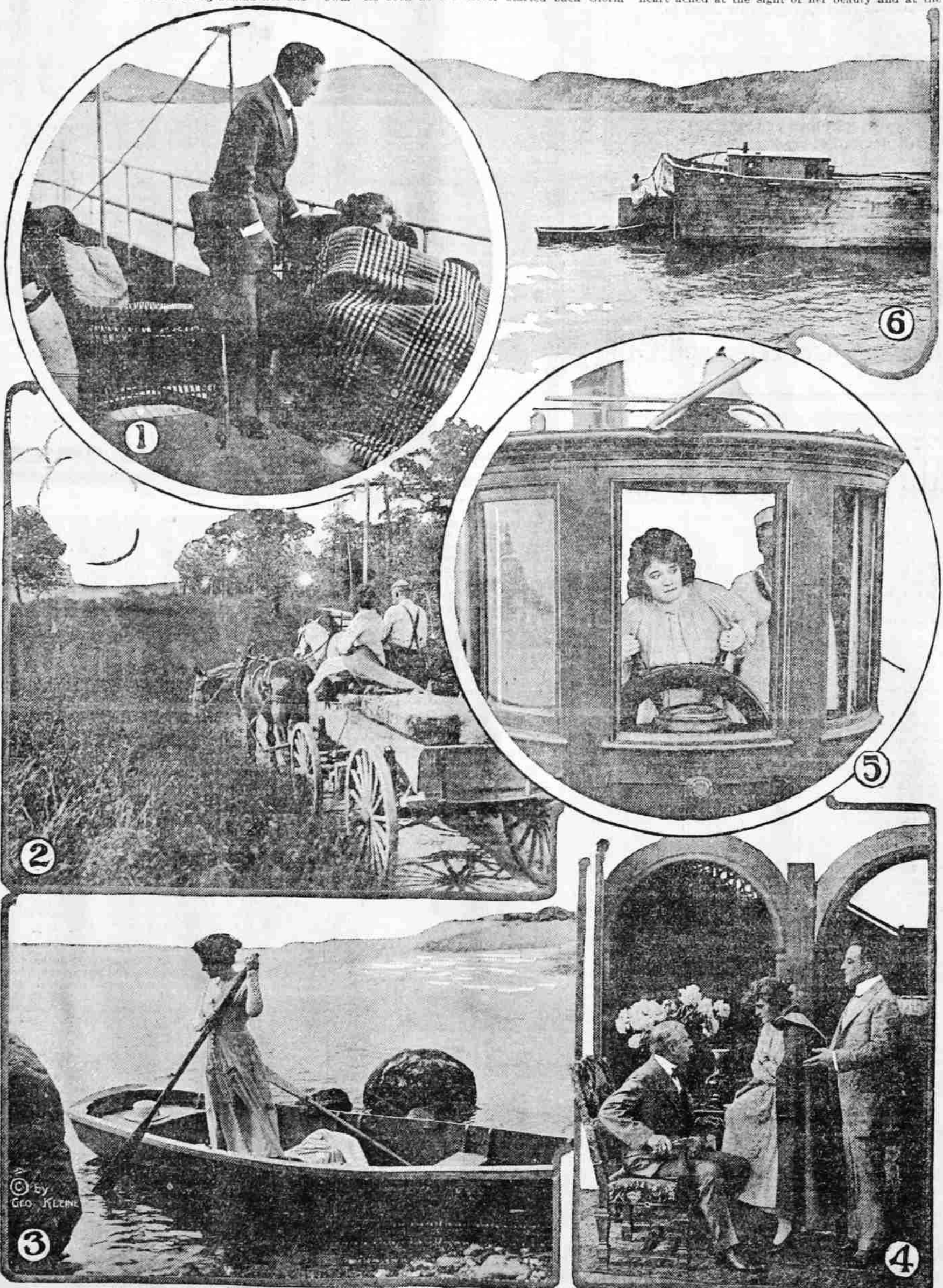
Trask had begun to grow used to the hope that his crime was to go undiscovered, to remain another of the many instances that disprove the old fallacy, "Murder will out." It seemed safe for him to return to his business as bargeman, yet he had no sooner entered his own cabin than a strange girl appeared, unexplained, and charged him with the murder. She avowed, in fact, that she had seen him do the deed.

Then she escaped, but after that nothing occurred to hamper Trask's northward voyage in his canal boat. His night was sleepless, however. He started up dozens of times, seeing Gloria's little white finger pointing at him, hearing her cry out again: "You killed him! I saw you!"

The daybreak found him stretched out at the stern of the canal boat, looking south for some possible avenger. He saw the yacht swooping up the stream long before Gloria made him out. He seemed to feel that the uncanny speed of the boat meant business. So he hunted out his old rifle and kept his eyes on the yacht, as it joined with relentless persistence. Finally he made out Gloria on the prow, pointing at him. On the deck were several men.

Now Trask felt assured that Gloria was a witch. She had appeared in his cabin, then vanished, only to reappear with a posse of yachtmen. He felt that he had been a fool to let her dupe him when he was alone. Now she had a little army and navy of her own. But if he got rid of her he would be rid of the only witness against him. So he reasoned with a madman's logic. He leveled his rifle at Gloria. He took careful aim. He fired!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



- 1—She Murmured, "Thank You, Stephen."
- 2—She Did Not Exchange Information for Hospitality.
- 3—She Landed on a Rocky Point.
- 4—Pierpont Decides to Go.
- 5—She Could Throw the Wheel Over to the Queen's Taste.
- 6—She Dropped Into the Skiff.

was so delighted that she turned and held out her hands. She wanted to embrace the driver for being so kind as to be going her way.

Anybody looks well coming to a rescue, but the young man driving the southbound automobile was too good looking for his own comfort or anyone else's. He accepted Gloria as a passenger with more enthusiasm than she relished. He jumped to the ground, lifted his hat, assisted Gloria into the front seat, and took his place beside her. He shot the car forward with a swagger and his compliments began to puff out of him. Gloria endured a number of

pressed the self-starter button and put the car into motion.

"The man heard the engine sputter and he yelled, 'Hey!' thinking the gasoline to blame. He was sure that he had forgotten to stop his engine and he was afraid that the car was running away with its pretty passenger. He ran after it, forgetting his hat in his alarm, lest Gloria be dashed to pieces on the side of the road. The clean way the car leaped across the hill and the hand Gloria waved in farewell reassured him as to her safety, but filled him with disgust and with fear that she were some new type of automobile thief.

Gloria's conscience was clear. The young impertinent had earned his punishment. The walk would do him good. She would restore his car to him by hunting up the owner of its number when she had time. If necessary her father could buy the car. It was a nice car. She loved its appetite for miles and fed it well. And finally it brought her back to her home

adventurous spirit which sent her tender body into so much danger with so few resources.

"I won't let you quit my sight again, Gloria," he said and stared with such idolatry that she felt a little afraid that he was loving her too well.

"Then you will come along and help me to capture the man who killed my beloved Dick?"

"All right, captain," said Royce with a plucky smile, though her allusion to Freneau cut him to the quick.

Judge Freeman seemed to be agitated by the plan Gloria outlined for the pursuit and capture of Trask. "You must not permit this, Pierpont," he protested, anxiously. "Your daughter has no legal right to arrest the man Trask. If she should capture him she would have to turn him over to the authorities and she would have to face a public explanation."

Gloria retorted with vigor: "You had him, Judge, and you said that he slipped out of your fingers. Now you advise me not to go after him again. You let him escape once and want me to let him escape